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ABSTRACT

This is a brief progress report on the activities of a research and development project commissioned and financed by the Swedish National Board of Education to develop a program of collaboration between preschool and primary school which will provide continuity for children. There are three major subsections of the project: (1) development of new and appropriate forms of activities and materials; (2) organization of various collaborative arrangements and testing of their effectiveness; and (3) collection of social-psychological data on the children in special need of stimulus and assistance. Project staff are also investigating the question of parent education in connection with increased preschool-primary continuity. Each subsection includes a summary of the development of activities and materials in book form useful in preservice and inservice teacher training, a description of the organization and activities of collaboration experiments, and a brief discussion of the aims and plans concerning the social-psychological study and parent education question. (ED)

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SCHOOL RESEARCH newsletter

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Title of project: The FÖL project, collaboration between preschool and the primary level of the compulsory school

Project no.: 104

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The FÖL project (collaboration between preschool and the primary level of the compulsory school) is a research and

development project commissioned and financed by the National Board of Education and conducted by the Department of Educational and Psychological Research of the Malmö School of Education in collaboration with the social welfare and education authorities of Burlöv and Malmö and the Malmö teacher training administration.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The methods of primary school and preschool education have a great deal in common, but there are also important differences between them. Differences of working the primary routines, content and methods between preschool and the primary level of the compulsory school can give rise to difficulties for children and teachers in connection with the transition from one level to another. There is a need for continuity in this transition, but also for stimulus and activities adapted to the maturity and level of development of the children concerned. There is also a need for early assistance to children affected by difficulties or handicaps of various kinds.

The FÖL project is governed by a plan covering three major sub-sections:

I. development of forms of activity and materials to give preschool education a partly new content in accordance with guidelines for the quantitative and qualitative expansion of the preschool which it is at present underway in Sweden, and also to provide a foundation for collaboration with the primary level of the compulsory school,

II. organizational collaboration between preschool and the primary level of the compulsory school aimed at developing and testing different forms of collaboration involving both teachers and children,

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III. a social-psychological study of children in special need of stimulus and assistance.

The project has also been commissioned by the National Board of Education, to consider prior to the 1974/75 school year, contacts with homes and parents and the question of parent education. As part of the project, a working group has been set up which began planning work during the spring of 1974.

In the following pages an account will be given of the work of the project in each of the various sections mentioned.

1. DEVELOPMENT OF FORMS OF ACTIVITY AND MATERIALS

In the course of the project a host of suggestions have been prepared concerning activities suitable above all for 5 and 6-year-olds. These suggestions have been drawn up by working groups made up of subject specialists, preschool teachers, primary school teachers and researchers on the basis of the goals and guidelines laid down by the 1968 Commission on Child Centres. The suggestions have been subjected to several tests and revisions before being summarized in a book entitled "GROWING UP IN PRESCHOOL - Ideas for Development". This book is intended for use by everybode concerned with children of preschool age, especially 5 and 6-year-olds, and with children of school age. It can be used for teacher training, in-service teacher training and other training activities for preschool personnel. The material has also been designed in such a way as to provide a concrete basis for collaboration between preschool and the primary school level of the compulsory school. In this way it can provide a common basis for planning and also serve as a starting point for information from preschool to primary school.

Briefly, the evolution of the material has proceeded as follows:

- Constructional work, in the course of which working groups have analysed and concretized the educational programme and

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goals of the Commission on Child Centres.

- Proposals summarized in version 1	Spring term 1971
- Testing of version 1. Assessments by trainee teachers and their tutors, as well as field experiments	School yr 1971/72
- Adaptations and revisions. Compilation of version 2	Summer 1972
- Field experiments of version 2	School yr 1972/73
- Adaptation, final revision, final compilation, printing and publication	School yr 1973/74

The book was printed during the spring of 1974 by Utbildningsförlaget and published in the summer of 1974.

GROWING UP IN PRESCHOOL - Ideas for Development. Contents:

Preface
Introduction
How to concretize general goals
How to use this book
Social orientation
Linguistic development
Creative drama - improvizations and puppetry
Aesthetic development - sound, rhythm and movement
- picture, form and colour
General science - conceptual development focussing on biology
- conseptual development focussing on physics and chemistry
Mathematical conceptual development
Suggested fields of interest
How we compiled and tested this book.

The work still remaining in sub-section 1 of the FÖL project

comprises the processing of pupil data already collected and the reporting of these data, teacher assessments and questionnaire replies that have already been processed.

II. ORGANIZATION COLLABORATION BETWEEN PRESCHOOL AND THE PRIMARY LEVEL OF THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL

The purpose of this sector of the project is to develop and test different forms of collaboration between preschool education and the primary level of the compulsory school. During the school year 1973/74, all field activities under the project were concentrated on collaboration experiments, the scale of which is shown in the following table:

	collaboration experiments		control groups in interview survey	
	no. teacher	no. children	teachers	children
grade 1	25	620	7	144
nursery day care centres and nursery schools	26	340 (6-yr-olds)	8	116 (6-yr-olds)

Collaboration was planned by the primary school teachers, preschool teachers and other personnel affected at the schools and preschool institutions included in the experimental activities. The design, content and scale of the activities were adjusted to the particular conditions applying at the various primary schools and preschools concerned. One important factor in this planning is the geographical position of the primary school in relation to the preschool. The conditions attaching to collaboration vary according to whether the preschool and primary school concerned are located in the same building or on the same site or are separate but not so far apart as to require unduly complicated arrangements

in order for children to get from one institution to the other.

The day care centre groups included in the collaboration activities comprise heterogeneous age groups. For the purposes of collaboration between day care centre and the primary school, an assessment was made by the teachers concerned of the ability of the younger children to take part in the activities organized.

The 50-odd teachers taking part in the activities were divided into groups of 10. Activities for the school year began with a meeting of each group. At this introductory meeting each teacher was given version 2 of the FÖL material (cf. previous section) together with spoken information concerning the applicability and utilization of this material. The intentions behind the collaboration experiments were explained and instances of the implications of collaboration given in the light of experience from the school year 1972/73. The teachers then embarked on discussions and planning work of their own.

Subsequent meetings of the teachers and the project secretariat were held one evening per month and the experiences derived from the experimental activities were discussed. The teachers exchanged experiences and also had the opportunity of carrying out further planning. These regularly recurring meetings supplied the project secretariat with continuous information on the progress of activities.

The purpose of such comprehensive experimental activities is to obtain the greatest possible amount of experience of collaboration. The intention is for this experience to form the basis and frame of reference of experimental activities during the coming school year, 1974/75. These experimental activities will comprise follow-up of activities during the current school year and further studies of certain collaboration models, among other things with the aid of observations.

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It is hoped that the experience thus accumulated will provide a basis on which other municipalities will be able to plan their activities in this sector. Certain preliminary findings are presented below under the heading "Experience and results of the collaboration experiments".

Evaluation

The collaboration experiments have been evaluated through teacher assessments and through pupil tests. Briefly the collection of data has comprised:

Teacher assessments:

1. Preschool teachers and primary school teachers have kept diary notes for each occasion of collaboration

2. Preschool and primary school teachers have completed questionnaires concerning collaboration at the end of the autumn term and spring term respectively.

3. The teachers' experience of collaboration has been openly discussed at every meeting. The project secretariat made detailed notes on these occasions. One of the meetings during the spring term included a discussion of "collaboration as a general activity in the municipality - how is it planned and implemented?" The teachers answered the question in writing.

4. Visits to the groups while collaboration was in progress.

Pupil data:

1. Maturity testing of the 6-year-olds, autumn term -73.

2. Tests of readiness for school attendance in grade 1, autumn term -73.

3. Assessments by the preschool teachers concerning the children's social, emotional and cognitive development, autumn term -73 and spring term -74.

4. Assessments by the primary school teachers of the children's socio-emotional development, autumn term -73 and spring term -74.

5. Sub-tests from "Egidius 1" in grade 1, spring term -74.

6. Conceptual test in mathematics in grade 1, spring term -74.

7. Reading and writing test in grade 1, spring term -74.

8. Interview survey of preschool children and primary school children concerning attitudes to preschool and primary school respectively, attitudes to collaboration and attitudes to starting school. Carried out during the autumn term 1973 and the spring term 1974. The questionnaire survey included several different groups of children.

Experience and results of the collaboration experiments

The following is a brief preliminary summary of collaboration between preschool and primary school in the course of experimental activities within the FÖL project. The account is based on replies to questionnaires, diary notes, discussions and visits to collaboration groups.

Planning

Collaboration was planned and organized by the teachers participating in the FÖL project, together with their various collaboration partners. Every form of collaboration has to take into account several factors such as personnel, premises, walking distance between preschool and primary school, day

care centre (sibling group or some other grouping principle), nursery school, group composition, timetables etc. Since every collaboration experiment made allowance for factors of this kind, a host of different models resulted. During the year teachers were very constructive in devising different models - the models that were best suited to their own conditions. Sometimes they started with one model, found that it worked badly and then changed and improved it so that in the end it worked well. Teachers sometimes changed from one model to another depending on the activities planned for the children. For instance, one model may have been used for the physical education lesson while another was used for school meals or puppetry. One model was used for ordinary lessons but was varied according to whether an entire class or only half a class participated during a particular period.

Implementation

The frequency of collaboration episodes varied. The commonest frequency for the exchange of children was once weekly, but this does not mean that every child visited the other level once a week. The frequency of these visits depended on grouping. If the preschool group or primary school group was halved, each child visited the other level alternate weeks, while if the groups are divided into three units each, each child visited the other level once every three weeks, and so on. Usually the regular exchange of pupils occurs simultaneously in preschool and primary school. In certain cases half a preschool group can be exchanged with a quarter of a school group.

Collaboration between sibling groups from the day care centres and grade 1 can occur on different days. This is because there are so few six-year-olds in the sibling groups. Usually the six-year-olds visit the school every week or alternate weeks.

The schoolchildren visit the preschool on a day when the

6-year-olds are present in the preschool group. If collaboration had been simultaneous, the schoolchildren would only have had 4 and 5-year-olds to work with. Thus since the exchange between the day care centre and grade 1 takes place on different days, there are also 6-year-olds in the preschool group.

During the school year, the exchange between preschool and the compulsory school occurred in both full and half class periods - most often during full class periods (for 14 collaboration groups). Chronologically this has been the only possible way of combining school timetable, preschool times and school mealtimes. However, the teachers taking groups where exchanges have taken place during full class periods have expressed a desire to utilize half class periods as well. Wherever possible the exchange has varied between full and half class periods depending on activities (11 collaboration groups).

On many occasions entire preschool or primary school groups have visited the other level, beginning with mutual study visits. Both (full) groups have also been together at the same time for puppetry, film shows, parties etc., at either preschool or primary school.

On isolated occasions both the preschool and primary school groups have been together for a complete school day (between 9 a.m. and 12 noon). The day has been jointly planned by the teachers, who have taken turns in leading the various activities. Both groups have had a school meal together.

An exchange of entire groups - with the preschool group going to the compulsory school and the primary class visiting the preschool at the same time - occurred on a number of occasions during the spring. Earlier during the school year these groups collaborated on a regular basis in divided groups. Since it

was found difficult - both in terms of timetable planning and for lack of premises - to achieve satisfactory collaboration in this way, experiments were made with an exchange of entire groups. The teachers found this form of exchange more rewarding, at the same time as the children appreciated the new form of collaboration.

Another form of collaboration teachers have tried exchanging levels, with the preschool teacher taking grade 1 and the primary school teacher taking the preschool children.

Group division

Group divisions have varied according to collaboration model (see below), the utilization of full or half class periods, the needs and desires of the children, the group division effected after the introductory period in grade 1, e.g. 3-group systems, the inclusion of a day care centre or nursery school group, the relative numbers of girls and boys and attendance registers.

Part-time preschool groups in the afternoon

The timetable at primary school level seldom permit collaboration with afternoon preschool groups. This will have to be noted in any future expansion of collaboration between preschools and primary schools. Efforts have been made within the project, however, to enable afternoon children from preschool to visit the compulsory school as well. On these occasion the children have paid study visits to the school, attended lessons and been given school meals.

Preliminary summary of collaboration models

A. Collaboration based on the children's needs

A:1 Regular collaboration

Activities are chosen and planned according to the needs

of the child/children. The composition and size of the groups vary according to the activities involved by collaboration. Collaboration occurs regularly and can occur simultaneously in preschool and at primary school level or at different times at these two levels (concerning day care centres, see explanation above).

A:2 Irregular collaboration

a) collaboration occurs on a flexible and spontaneous basis when needed by the individual child or a group of children. Collaboration occurs frequently but irregularly and is based on the needs of the child/children and the activities planned.

b) schoolchildren who are judged by their teachers to have greater need of preschool during the autumn term while preschool children pay more frequent visits to the compulsory school during the spring term.

B. Collaboration based on different group formations

B:1 Regular collaboration

a) regular collaboration with the same children every time. The exchange between the levels occurs simultaneously and involves the same groups on every occasion. Group sizes may vary according to the type of group division practised.

b) regular collaboration with different children every time. Different groups of children visit the other level during different weeks, depending on whether the class/preschool section has been divided into halves, thirds or quarters. See above, "Implementation". Exchange can occur simultaneously in preschool and primary school or at different times (cf. day care centres, above).

c) regular collaboration with complete groups. Entire groups change levels, the preschool and primary school group changing levels simultaneously for a complete morning once every month. The preschool teacher takes a full class and the primary school teacher takes a complete preschool group. Joint collaboration can also involve the preschool and the primary school level group simultaneously for a whole morning, with both teachers working simultaneously in both groups.

B:2 Irregular collaboration

Owing to organizational difficulties (walking distances, lack of personnel etc.), regular collaboration is not feasible. The teachers take suitable opportunities occurring during the school year. Exchanges are effected between different groups of children.

C. Sporadic visits

The afternoon group from the part-time preschool (nursery school) pays sporadic visits to the primary level during the latter part of the spring term.

Activities during collaboration

The teachers in the various collaboration groups have themselves planned the activities which took place during collaboration. They have made use of the opportunity of supplementation provided by the materials, premises and personnel of the other level. For instance, preschool children were able to explore the primary school gymnastics hall while primary school children used the preschool kitchen. Activities were sometimes adapted to the collaboration occasions, but they also followed regular planning. Joint planning occurred on a number of occasions, e.g. with an activity being introduced in school and followed up in preschool. Sometimes the preschool teacher led the less mature preschool and primary

school children in a certain activity at the same time as the junior teacher took the same activity in the compulsory school but adapted it to suit the more mature children. Collaboration between the children was encouraged at both levels.

The following are examples of activities that have occurred during collaboration:

Preschool

- Free choice of activity. Children were given a free choice of outdoor and indoor activities and of different materials.

- Preparing a meal and clearing up afterwards.

- Group work, sometimes in the form of a collage on a particular theme, e.g. "Children in other countries".

- Music, rhythmics, creative drama, e.g. puppet theatre.

- Experimental activities which could easily be carried out on preschool premises, e.g. experiments with plants, worms and water.

- Visits to the infant department of preschool, where the schoolchildren were given the opportunity of associating with younger children.

Grade 1

- Concentration and observation exercises, e.g. listening to different sounds and analysing pictures.

- Exercises to promote linguistic development and mathematical conceptual development, e.g. descriptions with the aid of pictures, distinguishing between the sounds represented

by different letters of the alphabet, working with "logical blocks" and "Cuisinaire staves". Conversation and exercises on general subjects, e.g. animals, plants, the seasons, public holidays, the family and road traffic. Use has been made here of school AV aids.

- Participation in school meals and breaks. Visits to school personnel (headmaster, school nurse, dentist, school hostess, canteen personnel) and to different school premises.

- Physical education (usually including changing and the use of the showers).

III. SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

The aims of the project are closely bound up with matters of social psychology. The collection of data carried out within the project makes it possible to follow the development of the children in different functions. Different preschool and primary school groups are studied in terms of the children's development and various kinds of influence and assistance given within the framework of collaboration between preschool and primary school.

Plans are now being made within the project for a special survey of children in special needs of stimulus and assistance. This work is being done in contact with the catchment team of the Malmö social welfare authorities and with the Gothenburg project entitled "Remedial education in preschool".

IV. CONTACT WITH HOMES AND PARENTS AND THE QUESTION OF PARENT EDUCATION

Prior to the 1974/75 school year, the project was also commissioned by the National Board of Education to consider contacts with homes and parents and the question of parent education. This commission has been discussed at meetings of

the project management group. A working party was set up so that planning work could start during the spring. Following discussions with the National Board of Education and within the project management group, guidelines have been drawn up for the activities of the working party, viz:

first and foremost, the working party is to carry out an inventory and survey of current investigations of parent education

The commission should be confined to the activities included in the FÖL project and should refer to the trasition between preschool and primary school

different forms of contact between parents, preschool and the compulsory school are to be developed and tested, particular consideration being given to the continuity of these contacts in the transition between levels

parental participation in bridging the gap to primary school can be designed at three different levels

1) different ways of informing parents prior to their children starting school

2) expanded parental contacts through study circles dealing with preschool education and the commencement of schooling

3) individual measures on behalf of the children, with the support, involvement and participation of their parents.

THE ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE PROJECT

The project is being managed and conducted by a project management group and a project secretariat.

The project management group has a decision making function. It comprises representatives of research, of school and

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social welfare administrations in Burlöv and Malmö and of preschool and primary school teacher training institutions in Malmö.

The members of the FÖL project management group are:

Permanent members	Deputy members
The Malmö Education Authority: Deputy Director of schools Olle Engquist	Marie Hersvall, Ph.D.
The Burlöv Education Authority: Director of schools. Officer Roland Tungsten	Bertil Brandt, director of Studies
The Malmö Social Welfare Authority: Jan Hultman, Head of Dept.	Ethel Wendel, Inspector of Child centres autumn term 1973
	Ulla-Stina William-Olsson, Child supervision. Inspector
The Burlöv Social Welfare Authority: Ylva Lindeman, Inspector of Child centre	Göte Degre, Head of Social Welfare
Teachers training college (preschool) in Malmö: Inga Lundberg, Teacher Trainer	Margareta Glifberg, Teacher Trainer
The Malmö School of Education (Primary Level Courses): Birgit Lindelöw, Lecturer	Gerty Rendin, Lecturer

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The Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Malmö School of Education: Birgitta Gran, Ph.D.

Olof Magne, Asst. Professor

The project secretariat includes the personnel remunerated out of project funds, i.e. research personnel (project leader, tutor, research assistants) and methodological expertise from preschool and primary school (see page 1). Its task is to be responsible for scientific planning and evaluation, to maintain continuous contacts between the project management group and fieldwork and to operate as a consultative body for the teachers taking part in the experiment.

There is also a reference group comprising representatives of union organizations, personnel associations, teacher training, administrative authorities, public committees and parents' associations. The reference group is primarily a consultative body and a vehicle of mutual information and, accordingly, is not invested with any decision making powers.

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